



## Durham City-County Planning Department

# CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION INFORMATION



## ***Why is a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Required?***

When a property is located in a local historic district **OR** is a locally designated historic landmark, the property owner is required to receive prior approval for exterior changes. This approval is called a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), and it is required whether a building permit is needed or not.

## ***What Type of Work Requires a COA?***

While some changes are considered routine maintenance and need no approval, others need to be approved by the Durham Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) or administratively by the Planning Department staff.

**Work that requires a COA:** A list of the type of approval required based on the scope of work can be found at: [http://www.ci.durham.nc.us/departments/planning/pdf/work\\_requiring\\_coa.pdf](http://www.ci.durham.nc.us/departments/planning/pdf/work_requiring_coa.pdf). Classifications in this list are based on the scope of work, project scale, and amount of deviation from historic materials and methods. Refer to this list to determine the correct level of COA approval required for the scope of your project.

**Routine Maintenance (does not require a COA):** A COA is not required for routine maintenance of historic properties, although other permits may be required. Activities considered to be routine maintenance include:

1. All interior work.
2. Exterior painting of a previously painted surface.
3. Replacement of window glass as long as window size, material and style is not altered.
4. Caulking and weather stripping.
5. Installing side and rear yard landscaping, including gardens, shrubs, and trees.
6. Landscape maintenance, including pruning trees and shrubs (except where the landscaping is used to screen mechanical equipment or utilities).
7. Real estate, political signs, temporary or incidental signs less than two square feet in area.
8. Repairs to walks, patios, fences and driveways as long as replacement materials match the existing materials.
9. Replacement of **small amounts** of missing or deteriorated siding, trim, roofing, flooring, steps, gutters and down spouts etc., as long as the replacement materials are exactly the same as the existing materials in scale, style, design, and materials.

## ***What is an Administrative COA?***

An administrative COA is an application that can be approved at the staff level, and does not require a meeting of the HPC. Staff reserves the right, upon review of the application, to determine that the request does require HPC approval and cannot be approved administratively.

## ***What is a minor, major, or master COA?***

These COA application requests are those that require review and approval through the HPC. The HPC will hold a quasi-judicial meeting or hearing regarding the application. It will review the information, take testimony from the applicant and any other persons wishing to speak, and can either continue the hearing, approve the request (with or without modifications), or deny the request.

## ***Can a COA decision be appealed?***

Yes. Appeals are taken to the Durham Board of Adjustment and must be filed within 30 days of the decision, and then may be further taken to Superior Court.

## Application Instructions:

1. **Pre-submittal Meeting Requirement:** Prior to submitting an application for a Minor, Major or Master COA, the applicant is required to meet with staff to review the proposed request. *This meeting is not required for Administrative COA applications.* Applications are considered incomplete and will not be accepted if the required pre-submittal meeting has not been held. To schedule a pre-submittal meeting contact Lisa Miller at (919) 560-4137, ext. 28270 or [lisa.miller@durhamnc.gov](mailto:lisa.miller@durhamnc.gov).
2. **The attached application must be completed in its entirety.** Refer to the following pages for detailed requirements.
3. **Applicable Criteria and Standards:** Proposed work in historic districts is evaluated against adopted criteria contained in the individual [historic district preservation plans](#). Proposed work on landmarks is evaluated against the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#). Please refer to the specific criteria and standards that may apply to your project. Applicants are required to explain how their project is in compliance with the applicable standards.
4. **Submittal Deadlines:** Administrative COA applications are reviewed and approved by staff and may be submitted any day during regular business hours. Minor, Major and Master COA applications are reviewed and approved by the Durham Historic Preservation Commission, and must be submitted by the deadlines listed in the application to be heard at the corresponding meeting.
5. **Site Visits:** As part of the evaluation of your COA application staff may visit your property to better understand site conditions pertaining to your request.

### ***Who can I call or email if I have any questions?***

Please contact Lisa Miller at (919) 560-4137, ext. 28270 or [lisa.miller@durhamnc.gov](mailto:lisa.miller@durhamnc.gov).